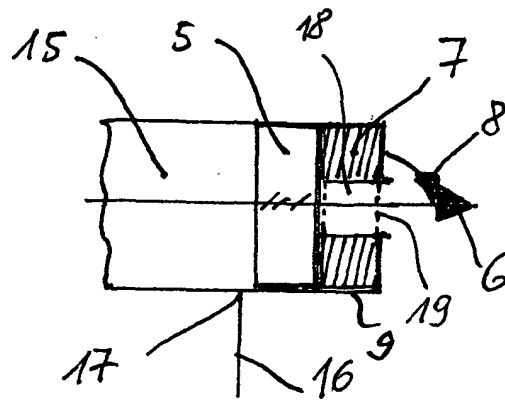


Fig. 1 b



Description

[0001] The invention relates to a system for delivering a stent into a blood vessel for use e.g. by a physician in a well-known manner for supporting and/or reinforcing the vessel walls and maintaining the vessel in an open, unobstructed condition. It is well-known in the prior art that the stent can be covered and secured in a catheter by a sheath during tracking and delivery in the blood vessel.

[0002] Furthermore, it is known that the sheath is retracted before positioning the stent within the vessel. A stent delivery system according to US 6,168,617 comprises a catheter with a balloon for inflating a stent which is covered during delivering by a sheath. The sheath is axially moveable on the shaft of the catheter and can be retracted in proximal direction by pull-back means. US 5,113,608 discloses a stent delivery device which comprises a hydraulically actuated retractable sheath. A pressurising fluid is either supplied by an inflation volume to a portion of a piston housing or is withdrawn from a portion of a piston housing, thereby actuating a piston. As the piston moves the sheath is retracted.

[0003] It is the object of the invention to provide an improved stent delivery system with a protection sheath on the stent wherein its handling is simplified.

[0004] The object is achieved by the features of the claims.

[0005] In order to achieve the object, the invention is based on the following basic ideas.

[0006] A device for retracting the sheath is coupled with a fluid pressure device for the inflation and deflation of expandable means (balloon) for deploying the stent. A pressurised fluid is supplied from the fluid pressure device to the retraction device and causes the retraction of the sheath. After or during the retraction of the sheath, the pressurised fluid of the cylinder is directed to the expandable means for expansion and deployment of the stent. According to the invention, the expansion of the stent is controlled by the position of the piston within the cylinder. Thus, an automatic inflation of the expandable means after or during retraction of the sheath can be achieved.

[0007] The invention has the following advantages.

[0008] The protection sheath is withdrawn by activating the fluid pressure device, which also controls the expansion of the stent by means of the expansion means. Furthermore, stent-loss and pop-open by using bi-stable stent designs such as Biflex-stents do not occur. There is also no flaring of stainless steel stents and no significantly increased profiles (sheath thickness 0,01 to 0,02 mm). If a drug coated stent is used, no drug will be lost during handling.

[0009] In the following, the invention will be explained in more detail with respect to the figures.

Figure 1b shows the partial proximal end of the cylinder 15 in figure 1a after retraction of the sheath.

[0010] In the inventive embodiment of Fig. 1a, a sheath 1 is arranged on a stent 2 supported by an expandable means 3, preferably an inflatable balloon. The arrangement 1, 2 and 3 is supported by a catheter (not shown) and inserted into a blood vessel. Furthermore, a sheath retraction device 5 to 9, 11 and 13 to 15 and a fluid pressure device 11 to 14 are connected with the arrangement 1 to 3 by a wire 4 and a tube 10, respectively. The wire 4 connects the sheath 1 with a first piston 5 in a cylinder 15 comprising a cylinder housing 9. A hook 6 is connected at the proximal side of the piston 5. The cylinder 15 further comprises a floating second piston 7 with an opening 18 which can be penetrated by the hook 6. The floating piston 7 closes an outlet 17 in the cylinder 15. The tube 10 connects the expandable means 3 with a tube 16 mounted at the outlet 17 of the cylinder 15. A tube 14 is connected to an inflation/deflation device 13 at the one end and via a unidirectional valve (check valve) 11 with the cylinder 15 at the other end. Furthermore, the tube 14 is connected via a unidirectional valve (check valve) 12 with the tube 10.

[0011] The inventive embodiment operates as follows.

[0012] In the arrangement of Fig. 1a the expandable means 3 is in a deflated state and the sheath 1 covers the stent 2. The floating second piston 7 is positioned so that the opening 17 of the cylinder housing 9 and, thus, the tube 16 are closed. An operator (physician) applies pressure from the inflation device 13 to the tube 14. The pressure shuts the unidirectional valve 12 and opens the unidirectional valve 11. Thus, the pressurised fluid flows into the cylinder 15 and shifts the first piston 5 with the wire 4 and the sheath 1 in proximal direction, i.e. the sheath 1 is retracted from the stent 2. The pressure necessary for moving the piston 5 is very low. When the first piston 5 reaches the floating second piston 7, the proximal end of the wire 4 with the hook 6 penetrates the opening 18 in the piston 7, and the piston 5 moves the piston 7 to the proximal end of the cylinder 15. Thereby, the hook 6 engages the hook holder 8 wherein the piston 5 with the wire 4 and the sheath 1 is fixed at the proximal end. This fixed position of the pistons 5 and 7 is shown in figure 1b. In this position, the sheath is completely removed (not shown) from the stent 2, and the outlet 17 of the cylinder 15 is open towards the cylinder chamber. In this manner, the pressurized fluid from the inflation/deflation device 13 flows via the tube 14 and the left side of the cylinder 15 through the outlet 17, the tube 16 and the tube 10 to the expandable means 3, inflates it and deploys the stent 2. The pressure is applied until a required stent diameter is reached. Then, the operator applies a vacuum from the inflation/deflation device 13 via the unidirectional valve 12 and the tube 10 to the expandable means 3. During this suction, the unidirectional valve 11 is closed. At the end of the

Figure 1a is a schematic illustration of a preferred inventive embodiment, and

stent delivery and deployment process, the catheter with the expandable means and the sheath is removed from the blood vessel and the stent remains in the desired position within the blood vessel.

[0013] The fluid pressure for operating the retraction device and the expandable means can be controlled in such a manner that the retraction device and the expandable means work concurrently or sequentially, e.g. in order to control the correct position of the stent.

[0014] It is an essential feature of the invention that the retraction of the sheath 1, namely at the end of the retraction step, automatically controls the deployment (expansion) of the stent 2. An operator can easily deploy a stent with a protection sheath simply by activating the inflation/deflation device.

Claims

1. An apparatus for delivery and deployment of an expandable stent (2) within a vessel, the apparatus comprising:

(a) a catheter having a proximal end and a distal end,

(b) an expandable means (3) mounted at the distal end of the catheter and being expandable by means of a fluid pressure device (10, 12-14),

(c) the expandable stent (2) being expandable from a delivery diameter to a deployment diameter and being mounted on the catheter over the expandable means (3),

(d) a sheath (1) being slidably mounted on the stent (2) and being arranged for proximal retraction to expose the stent (2) by means of a retraction device (4-9, 11, 13-15), wherein

(e) the fluid pressure device (10, 13-14) is further arranged for operating the retraction device (4-9, 11, 13-15) so that the expandable means (3) is expanded in response to the retraction of the sheath (1).

2. The apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the retraction device comprises a cylinder-piston arrangement (5, 7, 9, 15) operated by the fluid pressure.

3. The apparatus according to claim 1 or 2, comprising a control means (7, 5, 11, 12) for controlling the fluid pressure operating the retraction device and the expandable means, either concurrently or sequentially.

4. Apparatus according to claim 2 or 3, wherein a first

piston (5) of the cylinder-piston arrangement (5, 7, 15) is connected to the sheath (1) via a wire (4).

5. The apparatus according to any of claims 2-4, wherein the cylinder piston arrangement comprises an outlet (17) connected to a fluid pressure line (16, 10) for applying the fluid pressure to the expandable means (3).

6. Apparatus according to claim 5, wherein the cylinder-piston arrangement comprises a floating second piston (7) for controlling the opening/closing of the outlet (17).

7. The apparatus according to claim 5 or 6, wherein during retraction of the sheath (1) either the first piston (5) or the second piston (7) close the outlet (17), and after at least partial retraction of the sheath (1) the first and second pistons (5, 7) are in a position at the proximal end of the cylinder (15) and the outlet (17) is open.

8. The apparatus according to claim 7, wherein the first piston (5) comprises a hook (6), the second piston (7) comprises a first central opening (18), the cylinder (15) comprises a second opening (19) and a hook holder (8) at its proximal end, so that during retraction of the sheath (1) the shifting first piston (5) moves the hook (6) through the first opening (18) and the second opening (19) until the hook (6) engages the hook holder (8).

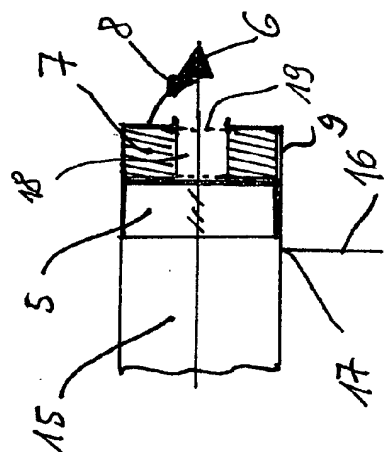


Fig. 1 b

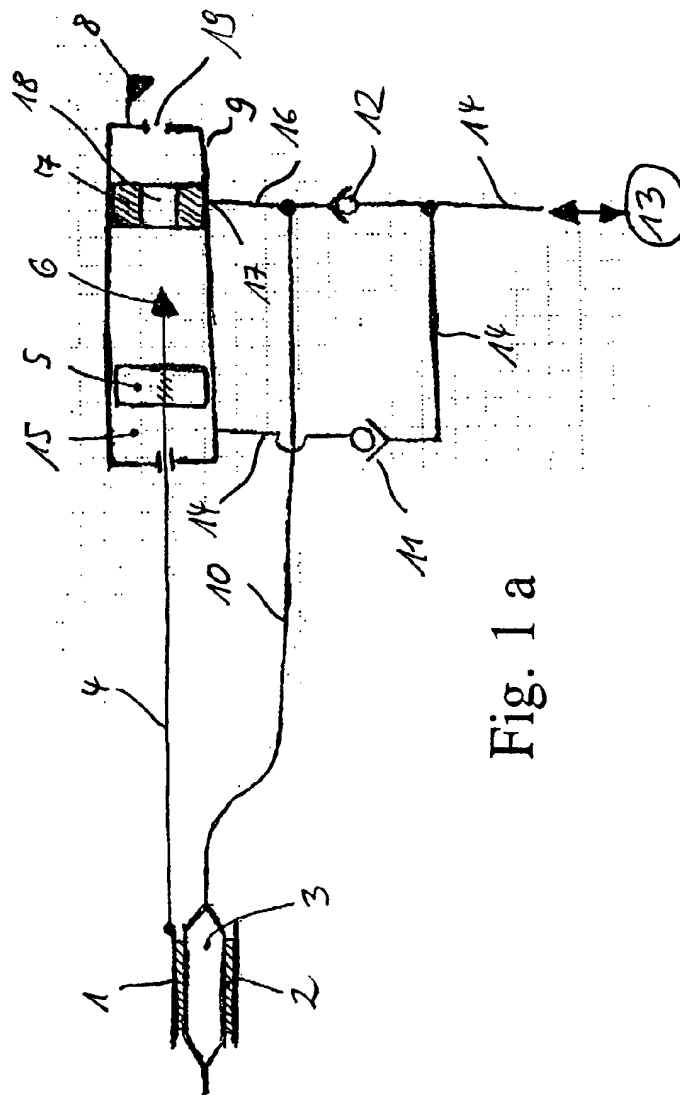


Fig. 1 a



European Patent
Office

EUROPEAN SEARCH REPORT

Application Number
EP 02 01 7696

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Category	Citation of document with indication, where appropriate, of relevant passages	Relevant to claim	CLASSIFICATION OF THE APPLICATION (Int.Cl.7)
A	US 2002/103525 A1 (CUMMINGS) 1 August 2002 (2002-08-01) * paragraph [0028] - paragraph [0038]; figures 1,4 *	1	A61F2/06
D,A	US 6 113 608 A (MONROE ET AL.) 5 September 2000 (2000-09-05) * abstract; figures *	1	
A	WO 00 18330 A (IMPRA, INC.) 6 April 2000 (2000-04-06) * page 10, line 12 - page 11, line 16; figures 8-12 *	1	
			TECHNICAL FIELDS SEARCHED (Int.Cl.7)
			A61F
The present search report has been drawn up for all claims			
Place of search THE HAGUE		Date of completion of the search 10 December 2002	Examiner Smith, C
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EPO FORM 1503/03-02 [P04C01]

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EP 02 01 7696

This annex lists the patent family members relating to the patent documents cited in the above-mentioned European search report.
The members are as contained in the European Patent Office EDP file on
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